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ABSTRACT

This booklet contains profiles of nine outstanding adult learners from eight Pennsylvania counties who have been recognized for their educational achievements and for acknowledging the power of education in their lives and overcoming great personal difficulties to improve and enhance the quality of their lives and those of their families and communities. The following individuals are among those profiled: (1) a 45-year-old veteran who overcame homelessness and joblessness after completing a literacy program and thereafter found employment and earned several raises; (2) a mother of 12 children who earned a General Educational Development (GED) certificate and plans to attend a community college; (3) a Thai immigrant who is now working toward a GED certificate; (4) a woman who, after being paralyzed from the neck down in a diving accident, completed her high school diploma and works as a volunteer tutor and advocate for residents of a local nursing home; and (5) a woman who, after earning a GED certificate, went on to graduate from a technical institute and ultimately earned a four-year engineering degree. Each student profile is accompanied by a brief profile of the adult education program completed by the student. (MN)

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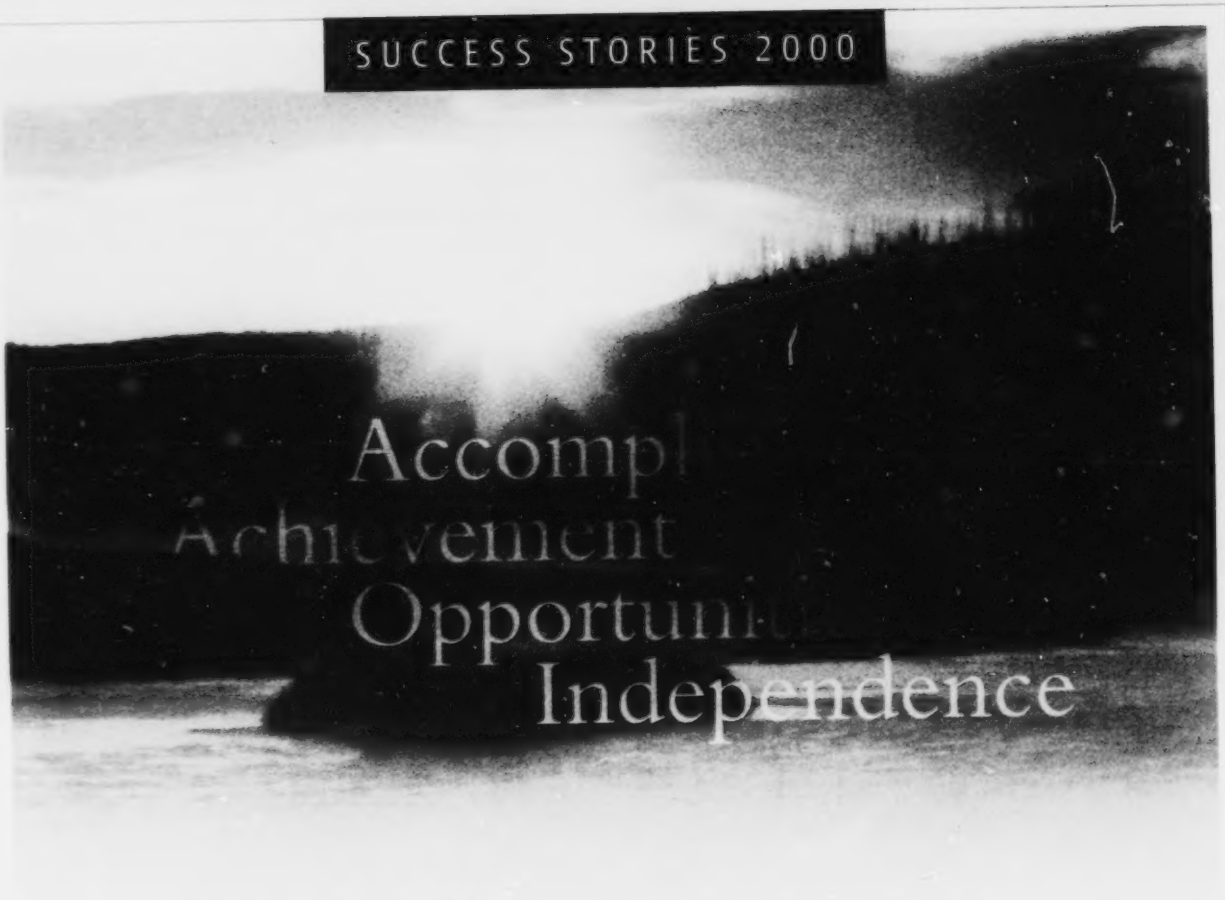
SUCCESS STORIES 2000



THE IMPACT *of* ADULT EDUCATION

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Honors Outstanding Adult Students in Success Stories

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

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Success Stories

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Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit 16

Opportunities Independence

March, 2000

Dear Reader:

On behalf of Governor Ridge, the Pennsylvania Department of Education is proud to share this publication, "Success Stories: The Impact of Adult Education." This booklet recognizes nine outstanding adult learners who have discovered the importance of education in helping them achieve their goals.

These outstanding men and women exemplify the thousands of Pennsylvania adults who enroll in adult education programs to expand their futures through adult basic education and life long learning. They have acknowledged the power of education in their lives and have overcome great personal difficulties to improve and enhance the quality of their lives and those of their families and their communities.

Pennsylvania's adult learners cannot do all the work alone. They need the support of local education providers, family members, employers and their communities to succeed. That is why it is important for all of us in the Commonwealth to recognize their achievements by continuing to support adult literacy.

The Governor and I hope this publication encourages your continued support of Pennsylvania's adult literacy programs. Truly, adult literacy is a goal for us all.

Michele M. Ridge
First Lady of the
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

2035 North Front Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17102

Accomplishment Achievement

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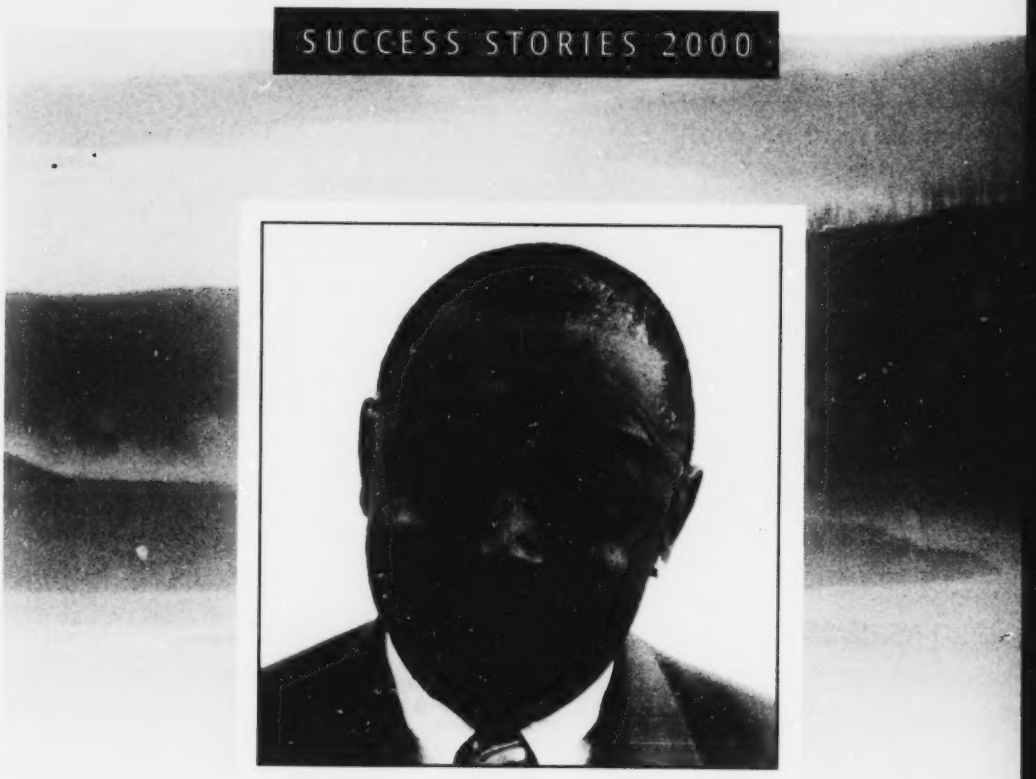
Opportunities. Independence

Deloyd R. Davis



sponsor:
Donald Block

program:
Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council

county:
Allegheny

"The key to success is the life-long pursuit of knowledge. Education is a never-ending process."

— Deloyd Davis

Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council

Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council (GPLC) provides instruction in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, GED preparation, English for foreign-born adults, job preparation skills, workplace literacy, and family literacy. In 1997, GPLC opened a learning center which uses the latest methods of computer-assisted instruction. At the present time, 750 students from Allegheny County are studying basic skills in instructional programs ranging from classes that meet three hours a week to those that meet 30 hours a week. The success of the program is measured by students' academic gains and life changes such as learners getting jobs and leaving the welfare rolls.

During the past three years, GPLC has been called on to be a site for national projects. The National Center for Family Literacy selected GPLC as one of 15 agencies in the nation for the Families for Learning project. The National Institute for Literacy and others chose GPLC as one of the four agencies in the nation to conduct a Literacy AmeriCorps project.

GPLC's philosophy is to help students set realistic short-term and long-term goals and to work towards the completion of those goals. Many students are taught in one-to-one tutorials, and others are in small groups of three to eight students. Instruction is individualized to meet the unique needs of each student. The Council has a professional staff of 30, and over 600 volunteers participating in the program.

THE IMPACT *of* ADULT EDUCATION

Deloyd Davis is a 45-year-old father of four who has turned his life around with the help of adult basic education. Deloyd did poorly in school and dropped out in the 10th grade. He received further education while serving in the military. Still lacking many basic skills when he left the Army in 1981, he was unable to find employment equivalent to his military rank or pay. He worked in a series of low-paying jobs as a janitor, a security guard, or delivery person. From 1991 to 1995, Deloyd had sole custody of his four children, caring for them with through welfare assistance. After the children's mother regained custody of the children at the end of 1995, he became homeless and jobless.

Deloyd qualified for the Veterans Administration shelter for homeless veterans. In early 1996, while working "door guard" duty at the shelter, Deloyd met Nancy Palmer, a Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council (GLPC) volunteer tutor, who was looking for one of her students at the shelter. After learning from Nancy about GPLC, Deloyd decided to begin adult education classes. Over the next 18 months, Deloyd increased his math skills by six grade levels. Once his spelling and writing improved, he learned how to write resumes and began the search for a good job.

With his newly acquired skills, Deloyd has made excellent progress in the job market. He started in a food service position at a hospital with a wage rate of $5.50 an hour. By moving to a different hospital, he increased his wage to $10.93 an hour and subsequent raises have brought him to $11.86 an hour. At the urging of his peers, he plans to run for union representative. Deloyd is active in the Army Reserves and expects to take a course in tank turret repair this year. He also plans to take a business management course so that he can become a supervisor in the food service industry. He has many ideas about how to improve the quality of food service at the hospital where he is employed, and he knows that he must become a manager in order to implement those ideas.

Deloyd recruited 10 other veterans from the shelter to be students in GPLC's program. The literacy program has also helped Deloyd to work with his children on their schoolwork. One son who had previously been doing poorly in school is now an honor roll student. His nine-year-old daughter calls him frequently on the phone for homework assistance. He is pleased about the rapport that he has with his children as a result of his improved skills. He knows now that lifelong learning is a necessity in today's world, and he wants to share that belief with others. He has seen a variety of benefits in his personal life, in his job, and in his family; and he is excited about the goals that he can reach in the future.

Odessa Jackson

sponsor:
Rose Gioia-Fine

program:
Allegheny County Intermediate Unit — Even Start Program

county:
Allegheny

"To the governing fathers of our state: I want to thank you for having this program there for me, so that I might achieve my dream."

— Odessa Jackson

Allegheny County Intermediate Unit – Even Start Program

With 1500 employees and more than 130 programs, the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) is the largest of the Commonwealth's 29 Regional Education Service Agencies. The AIU provides a variety of educational services including early intervention, gifted education, alternative education, adult basic education, early childhood education, and family literacy to more than 128,000 students enrolled in county schools. In addition, the AIU offers instructional support through continuing professional education to 8,800 educators. The AIU has been significantly involved with Head Start in Allegheny County since Head Start's inception in 1965. Since 1978, the AIU/Allegheny County Head Start program has expanded from less than 400 four-year-old children in Center-Based programs to 1357 Home-Based programs, one Early Head Start Center and 85 Family Child Care Homes.

Between 1991 and 1994, 11 school districts contracted with Head Start to administer and operate eight state-funded Comprehensive Family Centers, three Even Start Family Literacy Projects and a model CYS-funded First Steps Project. Beginning in 1996, AIU's collaborative effort with the United Way Early Childhood Initiative, Parents, and Community Partners has helped to create new childcare centers, partnerships with family childcare home providers, and an expansion of Head Start classrooms from part-day to full-day early childhood education and care, enhancing the capacity of schools and communities to support all children and families in Allegheny County.

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THE IMPACT *of* ADULT EDUCATION

In 1943, Odessa Jackson's great-grandmother, who had raised her, passed away. Odessa had to leave school in the 11th grade to get a job to support herself. She married and raised 12 children, 10 of whom went on to college, and as Odessa states, "... are a good credit to Society."

In the fall of 1996, Odessa enrolled in the Allegheny Intermediate Unit Even Start Program along with her daughter, son-in-law, and three of her grandchildren. Her years of experience added richness to the program benefiting children, parents, and staff alike. While in the program, Odessa completed the high school education she was forced to forego so many years before. On October 13, 1999, at the age of 73, she attained her GED with an outstanding score of 261. She is now looking into attending a local community college where she hopes to enroll in enrichment classes and further her interest in computers. Another goal she achieved while in the program was the completion of a Home Study Course for which she received an Associate's Degree in Ministry. She graduated summa cum laude reaching a personal goal that was important to her.

The education of Odessa was truly a family affair. In addition to those family members participating in Even Start, other family members supported her efforts as well. Every Wednesday, her daughter-in-law drove her to tutoring sessions at the Clairton Family Center. Her children and grandchildren helped her with her assignments and tutored her in math. Family members and volunteer classroom tutors read selections to meet the challenge of her visual impairment caused by glaucoma and macular degeneration.

Odessa is an inspiration to her family, her friends, and her community. She is an assistant pastor, a youth advisor, and visits the sick and shut-ins of her church. She has the custodial care of a mentally challenged niece who was widowed and became homeless when her husband passed away. She also cares for an adult son who experienced a mentally damaging injury. As the matriarch of her family, she encourages her grandchildren to stay in school and to do well in their studies.

Odessa has talked to students in the Even Start classroom about her love of learning. In an interview with the local newspaper, she talked about her success in the Even Start Program and encouraged others to value the opportunity to receive an education. She has recently been asked to address a Church Youth group in Cleveland, Ohio, to encourage the students to complete their education and pursue their dreams.

Jumnein Hagan

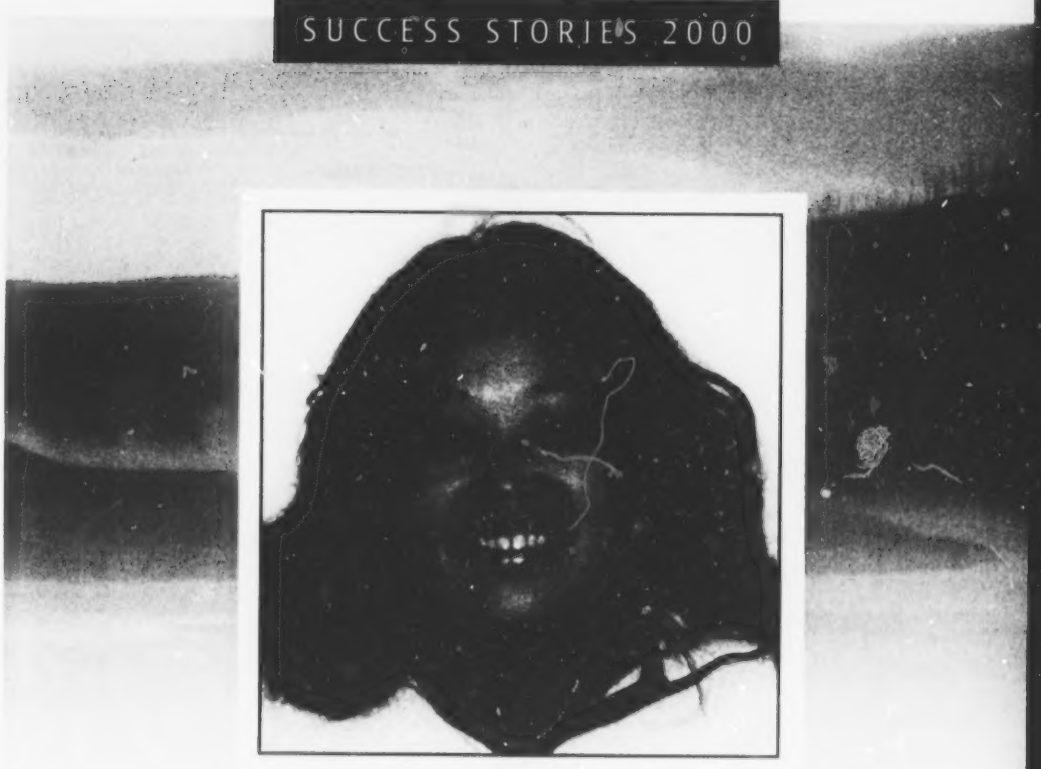
sponsor:
Susan Hays

program:
Clarion County
Literacy Council

county:
Clarion

"I am thankful to God for the Literacy Council. It has really helped me to read and write better and to improve myself. I have had good tutors. I love to claim the United States as my home because people are always nice to me and have helped me when I struggle to read or write."

— Jumnein Hagan



Clarion County Literacy Council

The Clarion County Literacy Council (CCLC) was formed in the fall of 1984 by a group of concerned citizens representing social service agency and library staff. Governed by a board of directors, this community-based program located at the Clarion Free Library is staffed by a program director, a student-tutor coordinator, and a secretary. CCLC operates throughout the year on an open entry/open exit basis serving adults learning basic skills, pre-GED skills or English as a Second Language.

Students seeking enrollment are first tested and, if instruction is needed, their curriculum is chosen based upon their goals and the test results. Students are placed in a one-on-one instructional program with a volunteer tutor or into a small group. Those ready to take the GED test are encouraged to do so.

From the 17 students enrolled during the first year of operation, the program has increased to some 120 adults. Referrals come from community agencies as well as from former adult students. Over 100 tutors are available to serve participants. All tutors complete a seven-hour training program which includes sensitization to the unique personal and academic needs of an adult learner. Tutors are taught to individualize instruction and to employ a variety of methods and materials for teaching basic reading skills. Training includes all aspects of the GED test, record keeping and informal testing.

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THE IMPACT *of* ADULT EDUCATION

Born in Thailand, Jumnein Hagan was forced to drop out of school after 4th grade in order to care for her younger brother and sister. At the age of 17, she arrived in the United States with her first husband, scared, pregnant, and with no knowledge of English except for "hello" and "thank you". She began learning English by watching television and taking night courses. In 1988, she divorced her husband who threatened to have her deported. She enlisted the help of her friend and tutor, Margaret Theilen and studied for six months to become a nurse's aide and a U.S. citizen. In 1991, after passing both tests and becoming a citizen, she moved to Pennsylvania.

Jumnein began taking classes at the Clarion County Area Vocational Technical School and later enrolled at the Clarion County Literacy Council (CCLC). She tested at the first grade level when she enrolled and an at-home program was set up so that she could learn at her own pace and receive one-on-one tutoring. She gained employment at the Beverly Health Center nursing home and soon found two additional jobs in catering and housekeeping to earn extra money to care for her children. She continued to raise the children on her own while working, attending classes with three different tutors, and participating in a local Even Start program with other basic reading and GED students.

In 1997, Jumnein remarried and got a job in the pharmacy department of the local Wal-Mart. This job helped her to improve her math and her speaking ability in public. Since remarrying, she is more focused on her educational goals. Now achieving at the 6th grade level, she continues to receive tutoring three times a week and has the goal of obtaining her GED in the next two to three years. She always encourages fellow classmates to attend classes regularly and has even provided them transportation.

Jumnein volunteers at the nursing home as a volunteer with the elderly, provides respite care for caregivers with elderly or disabled family members and has become an active church member. She arranges the altar flowers each week, does the record keeping for the weekly offering and, with her husband, has led a committee to refurbish the manse. She attends weekly Bible studies and believes that this has also enhanced her knowledge of the English language. Jumnein participates in a March of Dimes walk-a-thon each year along with the employees of her husband's business and is involved in raising money for the newly formed YMCA system.

Her son is returning from the Marine Corps and has been accepted as a student at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. Her daughter is considering returning to a post-secondary educational program while continuing to work as a model and actress in the San Francisco area. Jumnein's goal is to help everyone see the value of an education so that each person can be self-sufficient and independent. She credits her family for the happiness in her life, thanks God for bringing her this far and hopes to keep moving forward.

Jennifer Wambold

sponsor:
Samuel Gruber

program:
Cumberland Valley School District

county:
Cumberland

"I don't want to be a quitter. Anything can be accomplished, if you just strive for it!"
— Jennifer Wambold

Cumberland Valley School District

The Cumberland Valley School District has offered a High School Diploma Program for Adults for the past 19 years. The school district holds the philosophy that dropouts should have a second chance to return to school and earn a regular high school diploma. In the last two years alone, over 200 students from a seven county area have earned their diplomas through this program.

The Adult Diploma Program combines academic proficiency with the completion of life skills competencies derived from 52 subject areas established by the Cumberland Valley School District for graduating seniors. Upon entering the competencies portion of this program, students work at their own pace, meeting every third week with teachers to review their work. A staff of six dedicated teachers have been involved since the inception of this program.

Not only do students earn a high school diploma, but they gain a tremendous working knowledge of their home community. A Cumberland Valley School District Diploma is conferred upon completion of their portfolio. Graduates of this Adult Diploma Program have been accepted into all branches of the military, four-year colleges, the Pennsylvania State Police service and registered nursing programs.

Accomplishment Achievement

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THE IMPACT *of* ADULT EDUCATION

The summer before Jennifer Wambold's freshman year at Carlisle High School, she was paralyzed from the chest down in a diving accident. From that moment on, she became familiar with pain, sickness, and a body that no longer had the ability to feel or move. When she realized five years later that life was going on with or without her, she decided it was time to finish her high school education. Armed with a voice-activated computer and the knowledge that she would need to write with a pen in her mouth, Jennifer enrolled in a high school diploma program sponsored by the Cumberland Valley School District. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) was developed, a homebound instructor was hired by the school district, and teachers traveled to the Claremont Nursing Home where Jennifer lived.

Innovative approaches were needed in order to help Jennifer complete graduation requirements. Her IEP allowed her to view a CPR video instead of becoming CPR certified. Jennifer became an advocate for the residents of the Claremont Nursing Home. She interviewed residents about discrimination against the elderly. When learning about building permits, she interviewed a former township supervisor about special provisions for the handicapped. There is no doubt she demonstrated leadership in a nontraditional learning environment.

Jennifer continued her work through several physical setbacks. Ten days prior to graduation, she was in critical condition at the Hershey Hospital. Still, she was determined to be on stage to receive her high school diploma. She completed the requirements of the program in 1999 and reached her goal. She now has a volunteer art tutor and United Cerebral Palsy has provided computer training. She is hoping to move into a group home in York.

She has maintained family and civic responsibilities. She encourages her three younger brothers who have made a commitment to stay in school. Several students with disabilities have enrolled in Cumberland Valley's diploma program. She also prints and composes the calendar for the nursing home on her PC. Jennifer has vastly improved her outlook and realizes how much she can achieve despite her disability. Several newspapers were so impressed with her determination and achievements, that they provided in-depth coverage and publicity upon her graduation. When Jennifer received her diploma during the graduation ceremony, her 60 classmates gave her a standing ovation.

Opportunities Independence

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Accomplishment Achievement

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Opportunities. Independence

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Jessica Chambers

sponsor:
Joseph T. Lazarz

program:
Fayette County Community Action Agency, Inc.

county:
Fayette

"There is just too much in life to stop living. I just won't give up."
— Jessica Chambers

Fayette County Community Action Agency, Inc.

Incorporated in 1966, Fayette County Community Action Agency (FCCAA) is a private, non-profit community based organization that annually serves the needs of more than 40,000 low-income, elderly, disabled and educationally disadvantaged Fayette County residents. The Community Action Education Center (CAEC) established in 1980, provides literacy, Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Education Development (GED) programs throughout the community and in the Fayette County Prison. The Supported Work Program facilitates client's transition from welfare to work through job readiness preparation and job placement assistance.

The FCCAA's ABE/GED programs feature small classroom instruction, individualized tutoring, guest speakers and computer instruction. Classes focus on basic reading, grammar, the five GED subject areas, and career development and employment skills. The new Family Service Center includes a technology center where students can learn comprehensive computer skills. Many students enroll in one program and utilize others to accomplish their goals.

All programs are designed to assist adult learners to increase self-sufficiency through education, motivation, support, intensive job placement and case management. Working with the Pennsylvania Department of Education as well as the Departments of Public Welfare and Community and Economic Development, the Private Industry Council and the Uniontown and Connellsville Job Centers, the agency strives to increase its clients' self-esteem to enable them to become successful parents, workers and citizens.

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THE IMPACT *of* ADULT EDUCATION

Jessica Chambers dropped out of Connellsville High School during her sophomore year. Twenty years later, in 1990, she entered the ABE program at Fayette County Communuty Action Agency Education Center (CAEC). Progressing to the GED class, she passed the GED exam on July 7, 1990. While attending this class, she noticed other students having difficulties reading. This sparked her interest in literacy and, after completing Laubach training, she became a volunteer tutor. Since then, CAEC has collaborated with Jessica to establish a Literacy/ABE/GED study program at the Brownfield Community Center. Through these efforts, there are now 26 more literacy tutors.

Jessie holds classes Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and, when needed, two evenings per week. Her students are helped in whatever area they need, based on their assessments. Every participant in her class is taught library skills and must complete a book report which provides a sense of true accomplishment. Through her dedication, ten adults are able to read; six persons have attained their GED, and 16 persons in a Green Thumb program were helped with GED preparation.

With these programs comes the need for books and supplies. Jessie organizes fundraisers and contacts public and private agencies or businesses seeking donations of money, materials or time. She has been treasurer for the local unit of the Salvation Army for 11 years; organized and operated a food pantry for 11 years; volunteered at the local Republican Party headquarters during the 1980's; currently assists at the a Community Center Library, and belongs to the local Sportsman's Club and Horse Shoe Club.

Jessie continues all these activities although she is now in the latter stages of juvenile diabetes. She has been told by her physician that she will be blind in approximately 18 months. Even now her vision is impaired. She has had laser surgery but it is no longer a viable option. Her response to this situation is, "I'll just have to learn braille so that I can still help others. This is what keeps me going! There is just too much in life to stop living. I just won't give up!"

Jessie cares for five children: one daughter, three nieces and one nephew. Jessie has had two major strokes and a series of mini-strokes. Last November, one stroke left her speech impaired. She has recovered through hard work and persistance but has been left with weakness and numbness on her right side. Through it all, Jessie perseveres. She epitomizes a successful person held in admiration by those whose lives she enriches.

Cynthia Daum

sponsor
Margaret E. Rood

program
Luzerne County Community College Adult Learners' Training and Assistance Program

county
Luzerne

"Deep down in my heart, I know I have what it takes to succeed."

— Cynthia Daum

Luzerne County Community College Adult Learners' Training and Assistance Program

The Adult Literacy Training and Assistance Program (ALTA) is a community-based special program of the Community and Workforce Developmental Division of Luzerne County Community College. One of the college's objectives is to "provide special projects, programs, and services designed to assist non-enrolled students in meeting their unique learning and personal needs." Developed in response to Pennsylvania's literacy legislation initiative, ALTA began operations in January, 1987. Its goal is to enable adults who wish to further their education to obtain an adequate basic skills background for college studies or employment. Close ties exist with welfare agencies and the CareerLink Center, and businesses in the areas request instructional services for their employees.

Certified instructors and trained volunteers are used in cooperative and individualized settings within an open entry-open exit program. Clients are identified through agency referrals, self-referral, and outreach activities. Classes are held at 15 sites including three Housing Authority development sites, five Head Start sites, the Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center, and a psycho-social vocational rehabilitation clubhouse.

Instructors build learning teams within their instructional sessions so that there is a positive team atmosphere where students from diverse backgrounds feel comfortable being together and working together. Through strong community linkages, the implementation of individualized and cooperative learning structures within ALTA instructional sessions, the expertise of knowledgeable, supportive instructors, and ABLE funding, the Luzerne County Community College's ALTA Program has served 4,350 adult learners.

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THE IMPACT *of* ADULT EDUCATION

After losing both her parents when she was very young, Cynthia Daum spent most of her childhood in foster homes separated from other family members. After finishing 11th grade, Cynthia quit school at age 17 to get married and have a child. However, she never lost sight of eventually finishing her education. At the age of 37, describing her life in her essay, A Child: A Woman, Cynthia wrote, "Deep down in my heart, I know I have what it takes to succeed."

After having cared for three children of her own, four step-children, and 12 grandchildren, she decided to get her GED. Although she suffers with a physical disability, the pain doesn't stop her from caring for her children, giving "grandmotherly love" to her grandchildren, and furthering her education. Cynthia enrolled in the Luzerne Community College's (LCCC's) Adult Learners' Training and Assistance Program (ALTA) in August, 1997 and completed beginning and intermediate ABE levels one year later. In February 1999, she obtained the GED credential and entered LCCC's Human Services Program as a full-time student. Currently, she is employed as a work-study student assigned to the adult education program. She states emphatically, "When I get my Associate's Degree next year, my goal is to work with children and youth who are orphans or foster children like I was."

While maintaining her family, educational, and employment responsibilities, Cynthia never loses sight of her own personal goals. According to her instructor, "Cynthia never gives up." While in class, Cynthia would assist other students with assignments and encourage them to attend regularly. She even initiated a car pool to ensure that everyone could attend. Cynthia received the 1997-1998 Outstanding Parent Volunteer Award for her commitment as a Head Start parent volunteer. That year, she had contributed 585 volunteer hours to Luzerne County's Shickshinny Center helping the teacher in the classroom, reading stories to the children, and assisting on field trips in the Head Start Program.

While striving to achieve her educational goals, Cynthia goes beyond the norm in managing her personal and family life. She practices the skills she has acquired through the adult education program to help and encourage her children and her grandchildren. They even sit together to do homework assignments. As Cynthia puts it, "We help each other." In the future, she will use the knowledge she has gained to help other children in the community to succeed.

Opportunities Independence

Norma Fye

sponsor
Helen Guisler

program
TIU Adult Education and Training Center

county
Mifflin

"In order for my children to achieve what they need to do, I had to go back to school and get my GED."

— Norma Fye

TIU Adult Education and Job Training Center

The TIU Adult Education and Training Center began in February 1984 as a small subcontractor to the local Job Training Act (JPTA) office. The Center now has reached its 16th anniversary of dedicated service and growth in Mifflin County. From one GED program for 20 participants, the Center has expanded through a diversified funding base to serve 1,500 local participants each year. Services include adult basic education and GED preparation, Even Start and Family Literacy programming, Welfare-to-Work programs, basic education for the homeless and incarcerated, job search instruction and career counseling, job development and placement, workplace education, at risk youth counseling, GED Test administration and professional development for adult educators.

The Center is open full-time with ongoing classes year-round. Programs impact all age groups from birth to senior citizens and all backgrounds from those who have never worked to dislocated workers with decades of experience. A staff of over 40 supports the Center's wide variety of activities. The Center is administered by Tuscarora Intermediate Unit #11. Funding from state sources include Pennsylvania's Departments of Labor and Industry, Welfare, Community and Economic Development and Education.

The Center strives to provide quality programming and accomplishes its goals with the support of the agency, elected officials, the community, and most importantly, program staff.

Accomplishment Achievement

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THE IMPACT *of* ADULT EDUCATION

Growing up, Norma Fye did not view education as a top priority. After completing the 10th grade, she quit school to baby-sit for her sister's children. In the spring of 1996, Norma, by now a mother of five children, challenged her oldest son to get his GED. Because Norma had children under the age of 7, she was eligible for TIU's Even Start Family Literacy Program. In the Even Start program, Norma worked towards earning her GED as well as on parenting skills. After completing the Work First Program, she furthered her education and received her diploma on June 16, 1998. Her leadership abilities began to surface and she became a computer aide in the Even Start classroom and an officer in the Even Start Advisory group.

In December 1998, Norma and several other Even Start parents took part in a community service project at the Homeless Shelter. Impressed by Norma's ability and her hard work, Wilda Fisher, the executive director of Shelter Services, offered her a volunteer position. Because Norma was receiving public assistance, she chose to work at the shelter as part of the Workfare Program. Norma worked 29 hours at the shelter, continued her participation in Even Start, and managed her household and five children.

Her duties at the shelter quickly expanded and she was put in charge of the Thrift Shop. Her role was to train the volunteers who would work in the shop. When Workfare ended, Norma remained as a volunteer. In October 1999, she was hired as a part-time clerical assistant at the shelter. Her duties included assigning rooms, answering the phone, helping schedule appointments for the residents, and filing. She also volunteered her time after her 20 hours of paid employment. She hopes her part-time position will develop into a full time position.

Norma is an advocate for parents who are struggling with their lives. She has encouraged several of her friends and neighbors to join family literacy and other classes at the Adult Education and Job Training Center. She also inspired her partner, Jim, to join Even Start to improve his basic skills and to look for employment. She has spoken to community agencies about her accomplishments throughout her time in the program. In June 1999, Norma was given the Student Leadership Award at the Adult Center's Awards Ceremony. In July 1999, Norma and her family were given a scholarship to attend a statewide Title I Conference. At that conference, Norma and Jim were trained to assist other parents in improving the literacy skills of children. As a result of the training, they have been talking with parent groups, sharing the information they learned.

Opportunities Independence

Barbara Miller

sponsor:
Amy Pickard

program:
Lutheran Settlement House

county:
Philadelphia

"I thought getting my GED was going to be difficult, but I never came into contact with anyone who wouldn't help."
— Barbara Miller

Lutheran Settlement House

The Community Education Project of Lutheran Settlement House (LSH) is committed to providing a variety of educational services to adults, children and families that will enhance the overall functioning of the community. These services are offered in an environment that encourages lifelong learning, respects diversity and each individual's purpose for attending and builds positive self-regard. The primary goal of the Community Education Project is to promote literacy in a way that equips participants with the skills for self-development, academic development, and family well-being. It is the program's intent that participants completing the program will be empowered as critical thinkers, decision-makers and self-advocates.

The adult education division of the Community Education Project currently offers 24 adult basic education, ESL and GED classes to over 800 students per year at on-site and off-site community-based locations. Participants in on-site classes participate in level-specific instruction in Literacy, ABE, GED or ESL, weekly technology-assisted instruction in LSH's fully networked computer lab, individualized instruction by tutors, the commitment of full-time instructors, and access to LSH's vast resources. Staff members in the Adult Education division are committed to involving students in the learning process, assisting them in defining their goals, providing support for continuous progress, and providing a safe environment for questioning and learning.

Accomplishment Achievement

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THE IMPACT *of* ADULT EDUCATION

Barbara Miller is a life-long resident of Kensington, an area of Philadelphia where the high school drop-out rate averages 55 percent. Pregnant at 16, she left school, married and soon had another baby. By the time she was 19, the marriage had failed; but with the help of her parents, she raised both her children. Over the years, however, she developed a growing dependence on alcohol. During a particularly low period, she moved in with her daughter and son-in-law who helped her stop her alcohol dependence. In January 1998, one week after she quit drinking and 26 years after leaving high school, Barbara enrolled as a student in the Lutheran Settlement House education program. Just one year later, she passed the GED test.

Barbara says, "Getting my GED was a big achievement. I was very proud of myself. The math was very difficult until I put my mind to learning what it was about. I had two very good teachers who broke it down for me, and I worked with one tutor a lot." In fact, Barbara's math skills were fairly advanced. She would often work with her tutor on algebra and geometry during individual time. Later in the year, she would teach small groups of her classmates the higher level math skills she had already learned. Her determination and enthusiasm as a student garnered her the Etta Zwell Scholarship for Continuing Education. She plans to pursue an associate's degree in accounting at the Community College of Philadelphia.

Barbara has spread the word about the importance and feasibility of education to her family and even to her neighborhood. Her contagious excitement about learning encouraged her son-in-law to enroll in classes. She often assists him with his reading and writing homework. While Barbara enjoys tutoring any subject, her favorite is math. Every day she helps her two school-aged grandchildren with their math homework. Lately, a group of neighborhood children, ranging from grades four to seven, has started to converge on Barbara's house looking for help with their math. She recently tutored another program graduate for the math section of the city's Library Test.

Although Barbara completed her GED in January 1999, she remains in the program as a tutor. She not only helps many students achieve math competence, she also completes every assignment given the rest of the class. She so affects the other students that, at last year's graduation, several classmates placed ads in the graduation book thanking her for her assistance. In Barbara's intake writing sample, she stated her reasons for coming back to school as, "I have three grandchildren, and I think if I was better educated, I could help my little ones in school. I want to help those less fortunate than myself."

Opportunities · Independence

Joni Strennen

sponsor:
Ben Lipniskis

program:
Trinity Area School District

county:
Washington

"I realize that I could not have achieved my goals without help along the way from my family and groups such as the Adult Education program and the office of O.V.R."

— Joni Strennen

Trinity Area School District

The Trinity Area School District is comprised of four major townships covering approximately 80 square miles in Washington County. Since 1965, Trinity Area School District has provided Adult Basic and Literacy Education, ESL, and GED instruction to eligible adults. During these 35 years, Trinity Area School District has served some 6,500 adult learners in the community.

The Trinity Area School District was one of the first adult education programs funded. Its continued success can be attributed to effectual program planning, advertising and the extensive experience of its adult education staff. The instruction has been tailored to meet an individual's needs and is delivered through flexible and accessible scheduling. The program's intent is to enable residents of Washington County to be productive and responsible member of their community and society.

The Trinity Area School District links with social service agencies and businesses, such as the Pennsylvania Bureau of Employment Security, the Department of Welfare, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Washington Mental Health, and the local community college.

Accomplishment Achievement

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THE IMPACT *of* ADULT EDUCATION

In elementary school, Joni Strennen, who was exceedingly tall as well as intelligent, often was placed with older age groups. Her parents and teachers believed she would be more comfortable if she didn't tower over her peers. As a consequence, she tended to act older in an attempt to fit in. The strong reading comprehension skills she had developed from the wide variety of books she read made the transition easier. At 14 years of age, Joni began dating her future husband, George, and married him shortly after she turned 15. She had her first child at 16 and another 18 months later. Her father, an educator, was very disappointed when she stopped attending classes at the beginning of 10th grade.

During the early years of the marriage, her husband drove a truck for the family business while Joni worked at low-paying jobs. Sometimes she would not see him for weeks at a time. This became an established pattern in their marriage. Many years later, after not seeing her husband for nearly two months, Joni packed up the children and headed home. When her husband turned to someone new within two months of the separation, she started divorce proceedings. Then she decided to go back to school.

She applied for admission to the Washington Institute of Technology (WIT). The director allowed her to enroll provided she promised to attain GED certification by the end of her first semester. Joni enrolled in the Trinity Adult Education program and fulfilled her obligation. The math portion of the GED program developed her math skills enabling her to manage the Institute's math-intensive electronics courses. After graduating from WIT, Joni worked as an electronics inspector at a local plant until downsizing caused the closing of the laboratory. After switching to a factory job, she injured her back. Following surgery for a herniated disc, she spent several years collecting workman's compensation until her father suggested she contact OVR. Joni qualified under OVR auspices to enroll at California University to earn a major in electrical engineering.

Though no woman had ever graduated from the school's electrical engineering program and Joni had to be tutored in math every semester, she finished the course with honors. The university felt Joni had a compelling story to tell and she was asked to join a panel of recruiters to go into local high schools to inform students that "education does indeed open doors." Specializing in computer technology, she completed a five-month engineering internship with Bell Atlantic Video Services and, in her final semester, received the 1999 California University Woman of the Year Award. Joni is currently working as a project/field engineer for the high tech company, Control Solutions, earning twice the salary she had earned in the past with benefits she never knew existed.

Opportunities Independence

Left to right, front row: Odessa Jackson, Jennifer Wambold, Jessica Chambers, Barbara Miller

Left to right, back row: Jumnein Hagan, Deloyd Davis, Cynthia E. Daum, Joni Strennen, Norma Fye

These students were honored at the Pennsylvania Midwinter Conference 2000 co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education (PAACE) and the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE).

PAACE's membership includes teachers, tutors, counselors, professors, administrators, librarians, students and volunteers who work with adult learners in institutions of basic and higher education, businesses and community agencies. In addition to an annual Midwinter Conference, PAACE sponsors special interest sections and publishes a newsletter, journal and membership directory.

Accomplishment Achievement

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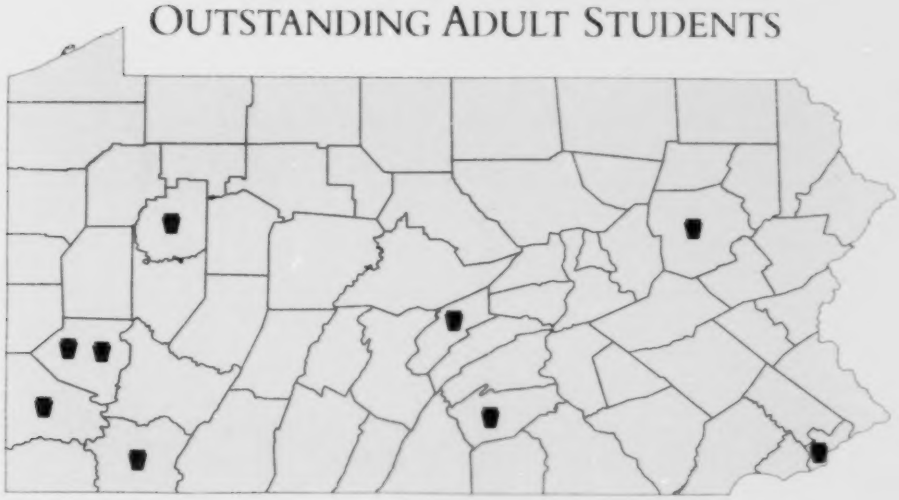
Opportunities Independence

PROGRAM LOCATIONS *of*
SUCCESS STORIES 2000
OUTSTANDING ADULT STUDENTS



THE IMPACT *of* ADULT EDUCATION

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